



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

EXHIBIT 22
DATE 2-21-13
HB 439

Testimony in Support of H.B. 439
Presented to the House Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Committee
February 21, 2013
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The Humane Society of the United States

I am submitting testimony as a proponent for HB 439 on behalf of the The Humane Society of the United States. HB 439 would require large scale commercial breeders to register with the Montana Department of Livestock and be subject to inspection by the state veterinarian. This bill would also require the Montana Department of Livestock to adopt rules to establish standards of care for dogs kept at these facilities.

In October of 2011, the Humane Society of the United States assisted Jefferson County and the Lewis and Clark Humane Society in the seizure of 161 Malamutes from a large scale commercial breeding facility. The dogs have been in the care of the Lewis and Clark Humane Society since October pending legal proceedings. In October 2013, Mr. Chilinski, a breeder and owner of the Malamutes, was convicted of 91 counts of animal cruelty and sentenced to 30 years with 25 years suspended. As part of the sentencing in December the dogs were released to the Lewis and Clark Humane Society and they are in the process of being adopted out or placed into foster homes.

The HSUS took on full financial responsibility for the care and sheltering of the Malamutes while the case was pending. After sixteen months the HSUS has contributed over \$500,000 dollars to the rescue of the Malamutes. If HSUS had not been able to assist in this rescue the financial cost would most likely have fallen on Jefferson County and the Lewis and Clark Humane Society.

The Humane Society of the United States is happy we were able to assist Jefferson County and the Lewis and Clark Humane Society in the rescue of the Malamutes, unfortunately we cannot assist in every situation. While we wish we could assist in every case of animal cruelty this is just not realistic. Therefore, when these situations arise in communities the financial burden falls on taxpayers, shelters and rescues.

Regular inspections and implementation of standards of care would help protect localities from the financial burden by ensuring facilities are taking adequate care of their dogs. In fact, if this law would have been in place, the Malamute situation most likely would not have deteriorated to the level it did. Montana has an obligation to protect its citizens and communities by enacting a law that allows steps to be taken to remedy these situations before a locality is forced to bear the costs of an expensive cruelty case. For these reasons, I urge you to support HB 439.